



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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Baucus Travels to Cuba to Urge Democracy for the Cuban People *Senator Pushes for Legislation to Lift the Cuba Travel Ban, Embargo*

(Washington, D.C.) U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, is traveling to Havana, Cuba on Saturday, September 13, 2003 to meet with Cuban officials, members of the Cuban business community, and Cuban dissidents in order to search for solutions that will bring democracy to the small island nation.

Earlier this year, Baucus introduced legislation that would seek to lift the trade embargo against Cuba, and remove travel restrictions between the U.S. and Cuba. In addition, Baucus helped establish the "Senate Working Group on Cuba," a bipartisan group of Senators who are focused on examining U.S. policies toward Cuba and determining the steps Congress can take to increase trade and strengthen the relationship between the two countries.

"It is time for 40 years of failed policy to come to an end," Baucus said. "The people of Cuba are suffering under a totalitarian regime that 40 years of sanctions have done nothing to alleviate. Given the recent detentions of Cuban citizens, it is more critical than ever to promote democracy in the region, which is why I am making this important trip."

A group of business people from Montana and around the nation will be joining Baucus on the Cuban trip to learn more about the country and ways to work together to help provide the Cuban people with more economic opportunities. Baucus and the group of American business people plan to meet with Eduardo Bencomo, President of Cemex and Pedro Alvarez, President of Alimport, among others.

The Senator also hopes to meet with leaders of the Varela Project, a referendum on democratic changes and recognition of civil rights in Cuba. In May, Castro struck out against the actions of Varela Project and arrested dozens of dissidents.

"The actions of the Cuban government against a group wishing to exercise free speech are deplorable," Baucus said. "My work to ease the sanctions and allow American's to travel to Cuba in no way shows any support for the Cuban government. Just the opposite. I'm working to help the Cuban people and I believe that one of the most effective ways to encourage democracy is by exposing people to all of the benefits of a free and open society."

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